

VZCZCXYZ0008
OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHC #4173 3011616
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 271610Z OCT 08
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD IMMEDIATE 0000
RUEHCH/AMEMBASSY CHISINAU IMMEDIATE 0000
RUEHCP/AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN IMMEDIATE 0000
RUEHHE/AMEMBASSY HELSINKI IMMEDIATE 0000
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL IMMEDIATE 0000
RUEHKV/AMEMBASSY KYIV IMMEDIATE 0000
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW IMMEDIATE 0000
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO IMMEDIATE 0000
RUEHRK/AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK IMMEDIATE 0000
RUEHRA/AMEMBASSY RIGA IMMEDIATE 0000
RUEHSM/AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM IMMEDIATE 0000
RUEHTL/AMEMBASSY TALLINN IMMEDIATE 0000
RUEHSI/AMEMBASSY TBILISI IMMEDIATE 0000
RUEHVL/AMEMBASSY VILNIUS IMMEDIATE 0000
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO IMMEDIATE 0000
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE IMMEDIATE 0000

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 114173

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/24/2018
TAGS: KNEI PREL EUR BO GG RS UP XG SW NO LG LH IC EN FI
DA, AF, IZ, MD
SUBJECT: NORDIC AND BALTIc POLITICAL DIRECTORS, OCTOBER 2
CONSULTATIONS IN VILNIUS

Classified By: Classified by EUR Assistant Secretary Daniel Fried,
Reasons: 1.4(b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary. On October 2, political directors and other senior officials from the nine members of the Expanded Partnership in Northern Europe (E-PINE), including EUR Assistant Secretary Dan Fried, met in Vilnius for semi-annual consultations. The principal issues discussed were Georgia, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Iraq, and Afghanistan. On Georgia, Poldirs exchanged views on how best to support that country's territorial integrity and democratic processes. With respect to Belarus, they agreed that the recent elections were disappointing, but that too much isolation might only serve to force the GOB closer to Russia. The participants shared concerns over the political infighting in Ukraine, as well as over the possibility of Russian subversion in the Crimea. They concurred that 5 2 format remained the best way forward for Moldova. Participants reviewed the positive trends in Iraq, as well as recent areas of concern in Afghanistan, which they agreed reflected in part the need for stronger government institutions. The U.S. will host the next e-PINE Political Directors' meeting in Washington in 2009. End Summary.

Georgia

¶2. (C) Swedish Political Director Bjorn Lyrvall led off the discussion on Georgia noting that Russia had failed to achieve its primary goal there, i.e. regime change. He said it is important to maintain pressure on Russia to abide by the terms

of the ceasefire. He stressed the need to show support for Georgia, and to ensure Ministerial-level attendance at the October 22 donor conference. Getting observers into the disputed regions is also very important. The EU should work towards rollover to international observers in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, adding that Russian demands for restrictions on Georgian military and police movement are unacceptable. He emphasized that business as usual with Russia is not possible.

¶3. (C) A/S Fried agreed that regime change was the ultimate goal of the Russian invasion and that while the GOR had failed for now, it is unlikely to give up. It is therefore important to shore up the Georgian economy, help stabilize the political system, keep pressure on the GOG to reform and strengthen its democratic institutions, and to strengthen the military so Georgia can defend itself. Russia and Georgia must be treated equally at negotiations; it should be clear that South Ossetia and Abkhazia are not on the same footing as Georgia. Should Russia pull out of uncontested Georgia, then the acute phase of the crisis will be over. It is important to find a way forward that prevents Russia from shoring up any gains.

¶4. (C) Estonian Political Director Kull noted that there are challenges ahead in maintaining Georgia's territorial integrity and in ensuring EU cooperation. The problem is that not all EU members agree about what needs to be done, especially on visa facilitation. Danish Political Director Damsgaard agreed that there is a need to stress territorial integrity, and that the EU mandate concerns the whole of Georgia, including the contested areas.

¶5. (C) Latvian Political Director Usups was most concerned about the October 15 international talks on security and stability in the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia as provided for in the September 8 Sarkozy-Medvedev agreement. He worried that Russia will pressure CIS countries, especially those with a need for energy, to recognize South Ossetia and Abkhazia. The engagement of the EU in monitoring missions lends an element of credibility. Finland's Vierros agreed that the EU presence is welcome; she found it worrisome, however, that monitors are still having trouble accessing South Ossetia.

¶6. (C) A/S Fried reiterated that the August ceasefire should not be renegotiated - the six point plan calls for Russia's withdrawal to the lines of August 7. If Russia shows it is serious in the October 15 conference, then we can respond seriously. If they are non-compliant, then we still have something to talk about. However, if Russia wastes everyone's time with talk of no fly zones and arms embargoes, then we'll know how to

respond to that as well. We will not accept arrangements where South Ossetia, Abkhazia, and Georgia are treated as equals - they are not. Russia may be testing the limits of the international community to see whether it can turn the meetings into a circus. On the other hand, Russia itself may not know what it wants.

17. (C) Denmark's Damsgaard opined that the issue of MAP probably will not be solved in December for either Georgia or Ukraine and that there is a need to think constructively about how to get around that problem. Estonian Political Director Kull was also concerned about Georgia's prospects for MAP in December, as some countries that had previously been supportive are now hesitant. A/S Fried said that MAP is the right thing to do and that the U.S. is supportive. Norwegian PolDir Ellefsen mentioned that there will probably be no agreement in December and that the allies will need to be creative, not confrontational. It is also important that Russia understand that its actions have instilled fear in its neighbors.

Belarus

18. (C) E-PINE participants largely concurred that notwithstanding some positive developments in Belarus, the recent elections were disappointing. A/S Fried noted the USG had responded quickly to the release of political prisoners by temporarily lifting the sanctions on some companies and sending DAS Merkel to Minsk. Pavilionis thought that isolating the regime too much would be a strategic mistake; most other e-PINE countries supported limited engagement with civil society groups, the opposition, and mid-level officials as a means to break Belarusian isolation.

All thought that it was important to offer Belarus alternatives to dependence on Russia, but were hesitant to do much more for fear of rewarding bad behavior.

Ukraine

19. (C) The Ukraine discussion focused on continued domestic political turmoil, the need for reform, and the potential for instability in Crimea. Damsgaard noted that Ukraine needs to realize there is more to democracy than holding free and fair elections, adding that the GOU's constant internal power struggles undermined effective governance. Turning to the issue of NATO membership, A/S Fried pointed out that although Ukraine is ambivalent about being issued a MAP, its increasing engagement with the EU is a good thing.

He expressed concern about possible Russian subversion in Crimea, adding that there is a need for more social programs and investment there and the Russians should not be allowed to operate freely. Lyrvall suggested that although getting observers into Crimea would be very difficult, it would not be a bad idea to set up EU information offices to get visitors into the area. Pavilionis continued to urge MAP for Ukraine, fearing that talk of compromise at this stage would leave ministers nothing to discuss in December.

Moldova

¶10. (C) Vierros began the discussion on Moldova, saying that the OSCE's overall objective at present is formal 5 2 negotiations. Romania would like to be integrated into the format, but its participation should be channeled through the EU. Russian influence in Transnistria is increasing and they are trying to re-launch their 2003 federation plan. A/S Fried said that Moldova should not feel compelled to adopt a plan that is bad for the country, reiterating USG support for the 5 2 talks. The Moldovan constitution ensures neutrality and the USG is not needed as a guarantor of that. If that is what Moldova wants, then it is their choice; neutrality is no hindrance to bilateral cooperation. Lyrvall noted that the EU needs to make Moldova an attractive option for Transnistria and that the EU can be helpful in that regard through an enhanced agreement and confidence-building measures. Pavilionis thought that Moldova is a partial success and that now is the time for the EU to get serious and complete its mandate, to prolong EUBAM and develop its role. The EU also needs to be ready to develop a civilian mission there.

Iraq

¶11. (C) Estonia's Kull led off the Iraq discussion, noting that the on-going conflict is a challenge to trans-Atlantic relations, counter-terrorism efforts, and Muslim-Christian relations. He was pleased the GOI is more able to control the security situation now, but questioned how it will do when the number of foreign troops decreases. The Maliki government's pressure to limit foreign troops is creating problems reaching agreement on the SOFA and he expressed hope that this will be resolved by the end of the year. A/S Fried thanked the e-PINE countries for their various contributions.

Afghanistan

¶12. (C) Ellefsen led the discussion, noting the increasing pessimism in Kabul, which he said pointed to the need for stronger government institutions and more coordination. A/S Fried said that there are a number of problems that must be tackled including better civil-military coordination and the need for a stronger coalition. He emphasized the need to support the Afghan military as it expands and that the USG has asked most of the e-PINE countries to contribute to that effort. We appreciate the efforts of contributors and know that there are many challenges ahead. Lithuania agreed with A/S Fried's assessment of the situation and thanked the U.S. for its assistance with their PRT in Ghor Province and the Swedes for their assistance on the Herat road feasibility study.

Participants

¶13. (U) Participants:

Denmark

¶A. Carsten Damsgaard Political Director
William Boe Deputy Director,
European Neighborhood and Russia Dept.

Estonia

Clyde Kull Political Director

Jaan Salulaid Counselor

Finland
Pilvi-Sisko Vierros Political Director
Sari Rautio First Secretary

Iceland
Nikilas Hannigan Deputy Political Director

Latvia
Peteris Ustubs Political Director
Kristaps Brusbardis European Correspondent

Lithuania
Zygmantas Pavilionis Political Director
Egidijus Navikas European Correspondent

Norway
Vegard Ellefsen Political Director
Stephanie Bjoro Senior Executive Officer

Sweden
Bjorn Lyrvall Director-General for Political Affairs
Anna Hammarlund Blixt European Correspondent

United States
Daniel Fried Assistant Secretary for European
and Eurasian Affairs
Joseph Boski Political Officer, Embassy Vilnius
Julie-Anne Peterson e-PINE Coordinator, EUR/NB
RICE